

Message Text

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44-S

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 H-01 INR-05

IO-10 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 SP-02 OCE-00 PRS-01 RSC-01

SS-15 USSS-00 SY-04 FAA-00 WRD-01 SCCT-01 SCS-03

SCA-01 /082 W

----- 074665

Z O 221330Z NOV 74 ZFF-6

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 7455

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN

SUBJECT: HIJACKING OF BRITISH AIRWAYS VC-10

REF: TUNIS 7192

1. MINISTER OF INTERIOR, WHO IS IN AIRPORT TOWER AND TALKING TO AIRCRAFT, HAS REQUESTED OUR ASSISTANCE IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE. THIS INCLUDES "SECURITY" ASSISTANCE (INCLUDING "MARINE SHARPSHOOTERS") AND ADVICE. I HAVE SENT WORD TO MINISTER THAT WE CAN PROVIDE NO "SECURITY" ASSISTANCE AND THAT EMBASSY HAS NO EXPERTISE TO PROVIDE. IN ORDER NOT TO LET HIM DOWN COMPLETELY, I DID SAY I WOULD SEEK GUIDANCE FROM DEPARTMENT.

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2. SINCE AIRCRAFT ARRIVED AT TUNIS AIRPORT NOON LOCAL, HEAVILY ARMED POLICE SECURITY VEHICLES LOCATED AT DISTANCE FROM PLANE AND GROUND VEHICLES ARE PARKED SO AS TO BLOCK TAKEOFF. NO ONE HAS LEFT OR ENTERED AIRCRAFT WHICH HAS DOORS CLOSED AND MOTORS RUNNING. NO SIGN OF WOUNDED PERSON WHICH HIJACKERS SAID THEY WANTED TO DISCHARGE HERE.

2. EMBASSY HAS NO INFORMATION RE DEMANDS OR NEGOTIATIONS BUT HAS INTERCEPTED CONVERSATION BETWEEN PILOT AND TOWER INDICATING "PALESTINIAN" WANTS TO "GET ON WITH NEGOTIATIONS". MINISTER OF INTERIOR CONTACT SAYS HIJACKERS PROBABLY NUMBER AT LEAST TWO.

3. COMMENT: I AM INCLINED TO STAY OUT OF THIS ONE UNLESS WASHINGTON ADVISES OTHERWISE. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, NO AMERICAN PASSENGERS ON BOARD. AIRCRAFT IS BRITISH REGISTERED. ON OTHER HAND, IF DEPT WANTS ME TO DO SOMETHING PLEASE ADVISE. TUNISIANS OBVIOUSLY BABES IN THE WOODS ON HANDLING MATTERS SUCH AS THIS AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY ADVICE THAT WE CAN PROVIDE. ON STRICTLY INFORMAL BASIS AND WHEN PUSHED, EMBOFF RESPONDED TO SECURITY DIRECTOR PLEA FOR COUNSEL WITH OBSERVATION THAT GENERAL CONSENSUS IN HANDLING HIJACKERS IS TO KEEP TALKING WITH THEM AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

4. NEW ITEM: FOLLOWING INFORMATION JUST PICKED UP BY MONITORING OF TOWER FREQUENCY . 1410 LOCAL: PALESTINIAN ON AIRCRAFT BROADCAST DEMANDS THAT THIRTEEN PALESTINIAN FEDAYEEN HELD IN JAIL IN EGYPT IN CONNECTION WITH THE ROME AIRPORT INCIDENT AND KHARTOUM (SAUDI EMBASSY) INCIDENT BE RELEASED AND BROUGHT TO TUNIS. HE STATED EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR IN TUNIS MUST AGREE TO THIS DEMAND WITHIN THREE HOURS AND THAT EVERY TWO-HOUR DELAY THEREAFTER WOULD PRODUCE HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES. SEELYE

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